



TARIFF PROTECTION.

On the 30th of August, in the year 1842, a certain bill received the presidential approval, and became law. It was called "An Act to provide Revenue from Imports." On its face, and by name, it was a revenue bill. In effect, and as a necessary and calculated result of its provisions, it was much more. It contained the legal machinery of a system, centuries old in other countries, but modern in this; a singular system, and founded on a singular idea; the idea, that taxes, so they be indirect and be paid in a custom house, are, not a necessary evil, but a positive good, to the people taxed. The advocates of this system, which they have strangely chosen to call *American*, contend, that industry is best fostered, and skill most effectually encouraged, by taxation. In the days of the Boston tea party, and for a quarter of a century thereafter, such a doctrine found small favor in the eyes of republicans. It remained for modern ingenuity to discover, that it benefits a nation to tax it, after any fashion, beyond the limit of the revenue necessary for its government. The Committee of Ways and Means of the United States House of Representatives, dissenting from that theory, have reported a bill, now under discussion, framed so as to effect a gradual return to the old revenue principles of Washington and Jefferson's times. It may be useful to discuss the merits and claim of a system, which it is thus proposed to abandon.

It is important to call things by their proper names. A false epithet lies commonly at the bottom of a false theory; and it is matter of marvel how vast and goodly a superstructure may be erected, by human ingenuity, on the frail and narrow basis of one false word.

Protection is the chief duty which a free government owes to its citizens; protection, not to life and limb and liberty alone, but to property and to the just means of acquiring property, labor. In feudal times, when the serf was called off from his plough, to waste his time in fighting as often as it pleased his liege lord to quarrel, that serf's industry grievously lacked protection. Or when a caravan of merchant adventurers was waylaid by the troops of some predatory baron, who levied contribution to any amount his capacity might suggest, then there was imperative demand for the interposing shield of the law.

Such outrages have ceased; yet, in our day, much is still said, on both sides of the Atlantic, about the necessity of affording protection to domestic industry and commercial enterprise.

In England, the proprietors of land are the chief claimants. Their statement of grievance is after this wise: "We have invested much capital in land; we employ many hands in tilling it. We claim protection for our capital, and for their labor." And if they are asked how and by whom they are injured, and against what aggressors they require protection, they reply: "We are injured by the wheat-growers on the continent of Europe and in the United States of America. We demand protection against them. If we have the English grain-market to ourselves, we can obtain eight shillings a bushel for our wheat; but if they are permitted freely to compete with us, the price may fall to five shillings a bushel. We ask Parliament to interpose and protect our home industry against this threatened loss."

For nearly two centuries, the land-owners who compose the British Parliament, listening to such representations, have decided that domestic industry—and especially that most useful branch of it, agriculture—must be fostered and protected, by heavy duties, against such impending injury. (*Note 1.*) Thus the corn laws have remained, year after year; and the British land-owner, favored by their influence, has pocketed two dollars a bushel for his wheat.

It so happens, however, that wheat is consumed as well as produced; that there are bread-eaters as well as bread-raisers. The grain grown on one landlord's estate becomes the food, perhaps, of five hundred laborers' families. These laborers take their scanty earnings, and go into market, whence the protecting arm of Parliament has excluded German and Prussian and American cheap wheat; and there, one week's ordinary wages buys a bushel of wheat. If there were free trade in corn, four days' earnings would purchase the same quantity, and two days' wages would remain in the laborer's purse. But Parliament, the guardian of home industry, will not permit this. So the landlord gets his two dollars a bushel, and the five hundred laborers pay it. This policy is called patriotic; and this robbery goes by the name of PROTECTION.

In these United States, the class of claimants is different, but the nature of the claim is the same. Our farmers, though worse paid for their labor than men in any other trade or profession, do not, like the British land-owners, ask for laws to raise the price of corn or pork. Almost the only protection for farm labor they have ever demanded from Congress is a pre-emption law; by which, when a man expends long years of toil in clearing and rendering valuable a piece of land, he shall be protected from the chance of a speculator seizing upon the fruits of that labor, and appropriating it, without payment for it, to himself. And, be it remembered! when this measure of true protection—this law to prevent the unjust appropriation by one man of the labor of another—when this righteous pre-emption bill was before the National Legislature, he, the very father of the American Protective System, (Henry Clay,) from his place in the Senate, declared, that the entire pre-emption system was a violation of all law; that the pre-emptors—squatters was the word he used—were a lawless rabble; and that when a man settled and improved a piece of government land, he committed an act of robbery as criminal as to break into the public treasury and steal from it the dollars it contains. (*Note 2.*)

But, though the land-owners of the United States, with an exception in the South, ask little or no governmental protection in market, there are other classes of men among us, chiefly manufacturing capi-

talists, many of whom adopt the principles, and employ the very words, of the landed aristocracy of Great Britain. The American manufacturer feels himself to be, as he truly is, a highly useful member of society. He likes good prices and fair profits, as it is natural he should. When these fail him, as in hard times they fail all classes, he has been tempted to cast about for relief to himself, as he justly may: but at the expense of others, and that he justly may not. He sees the favors granted to privileged orders in other nations, and is led to covet them. Like the English landlord, he complains to his government that he is an injured sufferer; injured by foreign competition; a sufferer by the cheap goods which the manufacturers of England and France and Germany bring into the market, that would otherwise be all his own. Like the British wheat-raiser, he would like to have the burden shifted to other shoulders than his; he demands that the Southern planter and the Western merchant and his own home customers shall be made to buy dear goods of him, instead of buying cheap goods from others. And a Whig Congress, following the example of Parliament, is induced to decree (if not without reference to revenue, certainly far beyond its limits) that cheap goods brought from other countries shall be shut out from the American market, or so heavily taxed as to come up to the price, which the favored manufacturer here sees fit to ask for his. This is called protection against foreign aggression.

An anecdote, which some humorist has related, aptly illustrates the justice of the proceeding. An old lady had an awkward chimney which required sweeping, and she engaged the services of a distinguished professor of the sooty art. The chimney was high and narrow and crooked; but what difficulties will not science and ingenuity overcome? The chimney-sweep, like other great inventors, had a long-cherished scheme in his head, and that seemed the auspicious moment to carry it out. "Madam," said he, "this is my plan. I will tie a rope to the legs of a large stout goose, and drag the bird down your chimney; it will flap its wings as it descends, and thus effectually sweep it out." "But," said the lady—she was a kind old soul—"the poor goose! what a cruel thing for it!" The man of ropes and brushes was poised for a moment; but true genius is never without resource. "Madam," said he, unconsciously adopting the very words of a celebrated ancient philosopher, under similar circumstances, "I have found it!" "Well!" said the lady. "If your ladyship thinks it would be cruel to drag a goose down the chimney, a couple of ducks might do just as well!"

The protection of a tariff is of a piece with the humanity of the chimney-sweep. The landed proprietor in England, the manufacturing capitalist in America, complain to their respective governments, that their rents and profits will suffer grievously by a reduction of duties. That is the case of the goose. Parliament and Congress, at the instance of this small class of sellers, decree, by way of relieving them, that the numerous class of buyers shall suffer in their stead. This is, very clearly, the case of the ducks.

Now, let our sympathies be enlisted on one side or the other, it must at least be confessed that this is rather a singular mode of *protecting rights*. When a man seeks to pick my pocket of twenty dollars, I very properly demand, that the law should protect my pocket. But when I ask a legislative body to take twenty dollars out of my neighbor's pocket and put it into mine, it would be a somewhat unintelligible mode of phrasing the request to say, that I desired to have the twenty dollars *protected into my pocket*. Protected *in* my pocket, that one can understand; but protected *into* it! The very grammar of our language rises up in judgment against a doctrine like that.

To this, of course, there is a reply. When did privilege ever lack specious argument to back her pretensions?

The reply is, that a protective tariff picks nobody's pocket; nobody's, at least, in this country. The doctrine of the advocates of protection—the stereotyped doctrine—the great tortoise upon which the entire world of their theory reposes—is, that "tariff tax does not raise to the consumer the price of the article taxed." And, by way of explaining an assertion which somewhat shocks the sense of plain men, they add, (to employ the words of one of their most eloquent advocates,) that "by shutting out foreign competition, the home manufacturer, having a larger and more secure market, can afford to produce cheaper, and will do so. So can the English corn-law-protected wheat-grower, having the market to himself, afford to sell cheaper than if foreign competition were freely permitted." But it is contrary to all experience, that to restrict competition is an effectual method of causing those who are privileged by the restriction to lower their prices. Three hundred years ago, Queen Elizabeth granted to certain corporations in England the exclusive right to manufacture salt; and history tells us, that they raised the price of that indispensable article from sixteen pence to fourteen or fifteen shillings; upwards of *ten fold!* one of the most striking facts recorded in the commercial history of the world! Yet these patentees, having a whole nation to supply, had a market large and secure enough to be a cheap one, if that be the condition of cheapness. A class of men, privileged by a protective tariff, obtain a sort of chartered monopoly, on a very extended scale indeed, and, for that reason, with less power of mischief; just as a dose of arsenic in a hogshead of water loses its deadly effect by dilution. But as each cupfull of that water still retains a portion of the poisonous quality, so does monopoly, however diluted, remain, in principle though with lessened effect, monopoly still. It is not the price a monopolist *can afford to sell at*, it is the price he *can get*, that regulates an exclusive market.

To fifty other similar sophisms, the good sense of the people may safely be trusted to suggest reply. When the manufacturing capitalist, seeking to increase his profits, reiterates, in speech and tract and periodical, this favorit absurdity, that a tariff tax imposed on an article causes no increase in its price, what answer will that good sense commonly suggest? A very simple and straightforward one, as thus:

"But as that tax is actually paid, some one must pay it. If five cents go into the treasury for every yard of foreign calico sold to us, that five cents must come out of somebody's pocket. Out of the English calico-printers, perhaps? Be it so. Then it becomes to him, in our market, part of the prime cost of his

calico. If he cannot afford to pay that five cents, and if, for that reason, he ceases to sell to us, all revenue from that source is destroyed. But if he continue to sell to us, then it is clear, that he gets from us his own first cost of production, his own profit, and *the tariff tax besides.*"

Thus will plain men reason; and most logically reason, too. The condition upon which alone permanent commerce can exist, is, that the seller shall obtain from the buyer some profit, over and above the entire cost of the article sold, including all expenses, be they freight, insurance, exchange, a tariff tax, or any other outlay of capital. If a law be passed which raises any one class of these expenses, the direct and inevitable effect is, as a general rule, to raise prices. To deny this, is to deny that the buyer pays expenses on the article he buys. It is an outrage on common sense.

It is easy to throw dust in some men's eyes; and to persuade shallow thinkers of any absurdity. The wonderful improvements in modern machinery cause the prices of manufactured articles perpetually and rapidly to decline. When an increased tariff just arrests this fall of prices, the fact is taken to prove, that to raise the tariff is not to increase the price. Or, perhaps, some caprice of the market—and a spoiled child is not more full of whims than the market is—may be brought up to show, that at the very time the tariff on a particular article was raised, the price of that article remained stationary or fell. All general rules have their exceptions; but the rule in this case is as clear, as that a man cannot make a living by selling goods under first cost.

To evade these home truths, some assert, that an increased tariff tax "is paid solely out of the profits of the merchant." To be consistent, they should assert also, that if freights were to become double what they are, or domestic exchanges were to run up to 10 or 15 per cent. as in 1839, nay if manufacturers were to put thirty or forty per cent. additional on every article they manufactured, all this would not raise the price to the customer who bought the goods, but only cut down the profits of the merchant who sold them. But that (it will be said) is grossly absurd, contrary to daily experience, and no man of common sagacity will believe it. Very well. Then why believe the assertion, no whit more absurd, that the particular item of cost paid to the government and called a tariff tax, does not add to the price of the article taxed?

And then, if this bare-faced piece of sophistry were actually true, what would become of the theory of protection? If a tariff does *not* raise prices, or as some Don Quixotes of the protective theory will have it, if it lower prices, by what legerdemain does it favor home industry? What is the complaint of the manufacturer? Is it that men insist upon paying him too high prices for his goods? and does his conscience compel him to ask for a high tariff, in order to reduce them? Has he been moving Heaven and Earth, appealing to the public through a thousand periodicals, besieging the halls of Congress with ten thousand petitions, all to cut down his own prices, or, at best, to leave them just where they were, neither higher nor lower? Do men—classes of men whose avowed business it is to buy cheap and sell dear—do such men toil day and night, rise early and sit late, ransack their brains for schemes of commercial restriction, at the prompting of motives like that?

"To laugh were want of goodness and of grace;
But to be grave exceeds all power of face."

Apart from such consideration, however, the flimsy absurdity of this doctrine—too childish for serious refutation, but that names of repute are among its advocates—is clearly apparent in an extreme case. Tobacco is worth, in the New Orleans market, some five cents a pound; or fifty dollars per hogshead of a thousand pounds. The duty on that article by the present British tariff is seventy-two cents a pound, or seven hundred and twenty dollars a hogshead. According to the theory of the protectionist, this tariff tax on tobacco imported into England is paid either by the foreign producer—in this case the American tobacco raiser—or it comes out of the profits of the importing merchant; it is *not* paid by the British consumer of the weed. Does it come out of the pocket of the tobacco planter? Does he receive fifty dollars per hogshead for his tobacco, and lose seven hundred and twenty dollars per hogshead, expenses on it? It must be a wonderful business, this tobacco planting, and men must grow marvellously rich by following it, at that rate! Or is the British merchant the loser by it? Does he pay five cents a pound for it in the New Orleans market, and seventy-two cents a pound to his own government, and then turn round and sell it to his customers for a moderate advance on five cents a pound, without any reference to the seventy-two cents duty, which modern theorists assure him is to be deducted from his own profits and is not to raise the price of the article to those who buy of him? That would be a novel method of doing business! And it would require some ingenuity to calculate, how large a fortune a merchant must have before he could afford to engage in the patriotic and self-sacrificing employment of retailing at seven or eight cents a pound tobacco that cost him seventy-seven!

But who, in very deed, pays the tobacco tax imposed by the British tariff? Who? The same, who pays the window-tax and the bread-tax and a thousand others besides; the same from whose capacious pocket are taken, year after year, two hundred and fifty millions of dollars, to pamper a king and pension an aristocracy; John Bull, the patient, the enduring, the tax-paying; he, every time he smokes a cigar, or inhales a pinch of snuff, or indulges in a quid of tobacco—he and he alone pays it. His government levies the tax, and upon him—not upon the American planter, not upon the importing or retailing merchant—but upon him, the consumer, falls the enormous duty. Try to persuade him that his tobacco would be no cheaper, if freed from the tariff tax. Explain to him that pretty theory of our American protectionists. You may spare yourself the trouble. John Bull is loyal and credulous, and it is no very difficult matter, in ordinary cases, to cast dust in his eyes; but, for anything so palpably absurd, he has a little too much hard sense to swallow that.

In this case, the fallacy of the doctrine stands forth in the extreme; in the case of a protective-tariff tax of forty or fifty per cent. on cotton or woollen goods, it appears in the degree only; but in both, the principle is identical.

An objector still replies, perhaps, that the cases are so far dissimilar that tobacco is not grown in England, and thus domestic competition in the article does not exist. Suppose tobacco were grown there; what, then, would be the result? Either the English-grown tobacco must then fetch seventy-seven cents a pound, or else no importer could afford to pay the seventy-two cents duty. In the latter case, the revenue would be wholly lost. In the former case, besides the tax actually obtained by Government, another tax would be paid by the tobacco consumer, not into the treasury, but into the pockets of the tobacco raiser, or rather of the owners of tobacco-growing lands; they would obtain ten times the real value of their produce. The British tariff tax on wheat is a practical illustration precisely in point. That article is grown in the country, and domestic competition exists. The annual produce of wheat in Great Britain and Ireland, according to the latest authorities, is about one hundred and twenty-five million bushels a year. (*Note 3.*) Its average price, which used to be nearly two dollars and a quarter a bushel, has, for the last twelve years, been a dollar and seventy-five cents. Our western country could supply the English market with wheat worth seventy-five cents at home, for a dollar and a quarter; or, leave ten cents as an additional margin, and say a dollar and thirty-five cents. Free trade, in corn, then, might be expected to bring wheat down at least forty cents a bushel in England. We may consider the British consumer, therefore, as taxed by the corn laws forty cents per bushel, on a hundred and twenty-five millions of bushels; that is, FIFTY MILLIONS OF DOLLARS annually. But the average revenue derived to the British Government, during the last twelve or fourteen years, from the tariff on wheat, is less than a million and a half of dollars a year. (*Note 4.*) The practical result of the English corn laws is, therefore, that an annual tax of fifty millions is levied upon the people of Great Britain, of which upwards of forty-eight millions and a half is paid into the pockets of the land-owners, and less than a million and a half into the coffers of the Government. Here is protection destroying revenue, as all high protection does. Here is the British laborer, the oppressed consumer, not only paying the tariff tax which his Government imposes, but for every single bushel of wheat on which he pays that tax into the national treasury, he pays it on THIRTY bushels to the nobility and landed aristocracy of his country—"men," as Jefferson expressed it, "booted and spurred, who ride him legitimately, by the grace of God."

But the corn laws of England injure the produce trade of other nations, (our own for example,) as well as oppressing the British consumer. Doubtless they do. The evil effects of these bad laws are not wholly confined to the country where they are enacted. And what a comfort it must be to the laborer of Britain, when the earnings of two days out of every six are stolen from him, week after week and year after year, by a protective bread tax, to be told that Prussia, and Germany, and America, are cramped in their foreign commerce by the same iniquity that daily picks his pocket!

And this system of legalized plunder it is which we are unblushingly told that we, republicans and freemen as we claim to be, are to admire and to imitate. But let these importers of British systems speak for themselves. In an address which has recently been officially put forth by the "American Institute," the mouth-piece of the New-York protectionists, we find the orator declaring: "The English have always pursued this policy of encouraging only their own people." And this policy, he proceeds to say, "has rendered them the most wealthy and most powerful nation upon earth." His conclusion is, "Why should we not follow such prosperous example?"

Are these doctrines of the New-York protectionists disavowed by the Whig party? Let a recent tract, entitled "Tariff Doctrine," and which is "published by order of the Whig Congressional Executive Committee," furnish the reply. There cannot be higher or more strictly official authority in regard to Whig doctrines. Now, mark what is in that tract openly avowed. On page 9, we find the following passage:

"We here beg leave to remark, that we know of no good reason why so large a share of our trade with foreign countries (more than one-third of the whole) should be carried on between the United States and Great Britain, unless it be owing to the wisdom in legislation, and skill in administration, practised by that nation for the protection of their own interests in agriculture, commerce, and manufactures."

Here is an adoption, an endorsement, in the very strongest terms, by the highest official Whig authority, of all and more than all that the orator of the Institute ventured to say. The "Whig Congressional Executive Committee" proclaim to us the "*wisdom in legislation*"—the WISDOM, observe!—the highest praise which the legislators of one nation could bestow on those of another—and the "skill in administration" of the British Parliament, when it enacts its iniquitous corn laws, that snatch the bread ere it approaches the starving laborer's lips! Who, after this, will dare to deny that Whig Congressmen, with professions about an *American* system ever on their lips, approve, justify, applaud, import—and that avowedly a *nd* aboveboard—the system, as they term it, the *WISE* and SKILFULLY ADMINISTERED system, of the landed aristocracy of England? Wise! yes, if to legislate with selfish wickedness for one's own class be wisdom. Skilful! yes, if to tread down the nobility of labor, like a crushed worm in the dust, be proof of skill. If such be the wisdom and such the skill which the Whig Congressional Executive Committee admire, devoutly may the free citizens of democratic America pray, that, under the yoke of rulers and principles like these, never, while time lasts, may they be condemned to pass!

Let us admit, however, that the New-York orator of the Institute says one true thing: Great Britain is probably the most wealthy nation upon earth. The average income, per head, of her entire population, is upwards of a hundred dollars a year; fifty per cent. higher, probably, than the average in these United States. (*Note 5.*) But how is that average income divided? Her people might be—with such an income they ought to be—comfortable and happy. Are they happy? Are they comfortable? To those who

read the English journals, and note the tales of misery with which these are daily filled, the questions may seem put in mockery. Let others, to whom the secrets of the prison-house may not have been revealed, examine a few authentic items here submitted:

The first is from the statistics of an annual report recently published by the Liverpool branch of the Corn-Law League. In reference to the general condition of Great Britain, the report says:

"In our manufacturing counties every eleventh inhabitant, and in our agricultural counties every eighth inhabitant, is a pauper receiving parish relief. This, however, by no means represents the whole amount of suffering. The horror of being branded as a pauper is so prevalent among the industrial population, that thousands prefer death by gradual starvation to placing themselves on the parish funds."—(Note 6.)

And the (London) "League" of November 11, 1843, informs us: "At the meeting of the British association held in Manchester last year, Dr. Alison, of Edinburgh, stated before the statistical section, that, in that capital, of 137,000 inhabitants, there were actually not less than 23,000 persons, or one in every six, in a state of utter destitution."

How eloquent are these mute and simple figures! In that garden-land, where wealth holds revel, and luxury has set up her throne—in that land, of which we are to envy the prosperity, and emulate the example—there, pauperism decimates the population! Throughout the length and breadth of England,—"merrie England" no longer!—more than one man out of every ten must bend down his soul to receive at the hands of a stranger—an insolent official, perhaps—the bitter dole of charity.

Would you look yet closer upon this picture of wholesale suffering? Take, then, another quotation from the Liverpool report. After stating that the council of the association had directed an official examination into the social condition of their own town, the report adds, that they had first selected Vauxhall ward; "though, from the large number of superior mechanics living in the ward, it is probable that the average condition shown there is superior to what might be found for the whole borough." And what is the condition of this ward? Read!

"Nearly six thousand families reside in Vauxhall ward; of whom 881 belong to the middle class. The circumstances of 4,814 families were examined; every care being taken to secure accuracy in the return; and it was found, that, of these,

- " 1,737 were entirely without employment;
- " 1,587 partially employed; and
- " 1,490 fully employed.

"It was ascertained, that the total earnings of 4,387 families amounted to £2,024 per week, being 9s. 3d. (two dollars twenty cents) per family on the average; but that £1,030 were received by 955 families, thus leaving only £994 to be divided among the remaining 3,432 families, being 5s. 9d. (one dollar and forty cents) per week for each; or, counting four persons to a family, 2½d. (five cents) per day for each individual."

If the account were less authentic, or less minute in its details, the result would stagger belief. In a ward containing 24,000 souls, of better average condition than the population of the opulent and flourishing city of Liverpool, more than one half the inhabitants have but the wretched allowance of five cents—FIVE CENTS!—a day, to keep body and soul together! that, too, in a country where wheat costs two dollars a bushel, and meat twelve cents a pound! And if any one yet ask, how, with means so hopelessly inadequate, the lamp of life is fed at all, the report still furnishes the terrible reply:

"Information was also obtained as to the way in which a large portion of the indigent poor supported themselves. It was found that 1,052 families lived by pawning, charity, and prostitution; 1,017 by savings, credit, relations, and casual employment; 57 by parish relief, with other assistance."

More than one-half the living creatures that congregate in a princely city lingering out life on a pittance that equals for each individual per day the price of A SINGLE POUND OF FLOUR!—less than the price of ONE HALF POUND OF MEAT! One-sixth of that entire city beggars and prostitutes! The mind cannot grasp—cannot realize this wholesale exhibition of shame and woe. "The multitude of sad groups," as Sterne has expressed it, "do but distract us." Let us take the "single captive," then. And touchingly has the picture been drawn by one of these down-trodden millions—a Plebeian poet—a man who has lived and suffered among the scenes he well describes:

"God help the poor! an infant's feeble wail
Comes from yon narrow gateway: and behold
A female crouching there, so deathly pale,
Huddling her child to screen it from the cold!
Her vesture scant, her bonnet crushed and torn,
A thin shawl doth her baby dear enfold;
And there she bides the ruthless gale of morn,
Which to her very heart hath sent its cold!
And now she sudden darts a ravening look,
As one with new hot bread comes past the nook!
And, as the tempting load is onward borne,
She weeps! God help thee, hapless one, forlorn!"

Let it not be imagined that such examples of wretchedness are found among the outcasts of great cities alone. The leprosy of destitution has spread itself far and wide, over the entire extent of the land; entering not alone the cellar or the garret of the crowded alley, but penetrating to the hamlet of the cottager,

to the cold and comfortless hearth of the tiller of the soil. He who feeds the world is himself on the verge of starvation! "There is not a step," says the Westminster Review, "but simply a hand's breadth, between the agricultural laborer and pauperism." A laborer at Bideford, in Devonshire, was recently tried for stealing a piece of bacon; and the wife of his employer deposed:

"My husband gives the prisoner six shillings (a dollar and forty-six cents) a week. We sometimes gave him his dinner, if we thought he had none. Six shillings is the usual rate of wages."

"The prisoner had a wife and three children; the jury found him guilty, but recommended him to mercy on account of his poverty."

Where, then, is the abundant wealth, which England's political writers vauntingly put forth, in their long statistical tables, as the heritage of her favored people? Where? We hear daily instances among her nobility and gentry of men dying, and leaving behind them a million of dollars, five, ten—in a recent case twenty millions—to curse and ruin, mind and body, those who succeed to the bloated inheritance. The farm laborer, with his wife and her little ones to clothe and feed—toil to live, and living only to die—receives in return for an entire week of that ceaseless toil, the price of one bushel of wheat; but the stock of cigars of the late Duke of Sussex was sold, the other day at auction, for Ten Thousand Dollars!

And this is the land—its people crushed down with poverty, its nobles revelling in pomp and pride—this is the wealthy and powerful nation, whose system of policy we are to adopt; the wickedness—that is the honest word—the wickedness of whose rulers we are to set up as a shining light to guide our statesmen—as a lamp to direct our steps!

Has not the "Whig Congressional Executive Committee" officially extolled the wisdom of that system—expressly avowed their admiration of the skill of these rulers? And have we not found it written, "WHY SHOULD WE NOT FOLLOW SUCH A PROSPEROUS EXAMPLE?" Shame! Shame on the question! There may be one excuse—there is but one—for the man, treading this soil of the free, who could put such a question to a republican audience; and it is, that he knew nothing of the actual state of that country, whose "prosperous example" he holds up to our envy and imitation.

And it is he, and such as he, who are terribly shocked at foreign importations of linens and broadcloths and calicoes! They detest and abjure the abomination of clothing from a British loom. Ah! truly has politics her Pharisees, as well as religion—men who strain at a gnat and swallow a camel. Foreign importations! Better a whole world of British calicoes than one British system! Our wives and children may wear the one, and be no whit the worse republicans for the cheap and simple wear; but let our statesmen imitate and adopt the other, and it will sap the foundation of our institutions; ay! endanger—did it not once in the days of the blue cockade and palmetto button?—endanger even the integrity of our Union.

To no illiberal prejudice let us appeal. He is the enemy of his kind who would suborn, as auxiliary in party strife, the evil spirit of national animosity. So far as the doings of other nations are just and wise, we are not permitted only—by the dictates of enlightened policy we are enjoined—to imitate them; and there is an example, a noble example set us by Great Britain, which we would do well to follow; but an example set by her suffering Many, not by her ruling Few. Let us distinguish—and we are too apt to overlook this—let us distinguish well between the People and their Rulers—between the oppressors and the oppressed. These oppressors we might still address, as that apostle of Freedom, good old John Milton, addressed them two hundred years ago:

"Lords and Commons of England! Consider what it is whereof ye are, and whereof ye are the governors; a nation not slow and dull, but of a quick, ingenious, and piercing spirit; acute to invent, subtle and sinewy to discourse, not beneath any point—the highest that human capacity can soar to. What wants there, to such a cowardly and pregnant soil, but wise and faithful laborers, to make a knowing people?"

Such faithful laborers have been found. The spirit of Hampden and of Sidney—that spirit from which an offset was erst transplanted to these shores, to spread and flourish, and bless this Western republic—that sturdy spirit lives in the little island yet. It is, 'even now, stirring up her thousands and tens of thousands; and these are banding themselves together, to destroy, by the slow but resistless force of reason and of public opinion, that iniquitous system which our own aristocracy still hope to retain; and to perpetuate.'

At a recent meeting of the Free-trade League, held at Manchester, sixty thousand dollars (practical proof of sincerity, that!) were collected in a single day. Three hundred and fifty thousand dollars have been subscribed to the League fund this season, already; and the friends of that Association confidently assert that, "if necessary, double the amount will be raised next year." These vast sums are expended in disseminating cheap pamphlets, explaining and enforcing the doctrines of free trade. Last year, in the course of six weeks, one million packages, each containing twelve short tracts, were gratuitously distributed throughout Great Britain.

But while the friends of equal rights in England are thus nobly waging battle against the monopoly of their protective system, we are called upon to foster the iniquity they are discarding; and as they chase the unsightly monster from his den in the Old World, we are to receive and pamper him in the rich fields and free forests of the New?

The success, however, or the failure of foreign attempts at reform, should not influence our course. Let European nations act as they will, our duty is simple and straightforward. A free government has no right to her children of preference. A law expressly framed to favor one class, or say, to relieve one class of the community from a burden by shifting that burden, directly or indirectly, to the shoulders of another class, is more than an injustice—it is a usurpation. The necessity for revenue justifies taxation. Nothing

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else can. To tax permanently, in any form, with any intention, beyond the limit of necessary revenue, is to CONFISCATE.

And for whom, in our country, this usurpation! For whose benefit this confiscation of the property of free citizens? It is bad enough when the reckless Many, in the pride of their numerical strength, ride over the rights of the helpless Few; it is far worse when the Many suffer, that the Few may gain. Class legislation is ever to be deprecated; yet if it have an excusable phase, it is, when inordinate wealth is made to bear a disproportioned burden in favor, and for the relief, of poverty.

But how stands the case now before us? The agricultural interest bears the burden; the trading and manufacturing classes reap the benefit. Now, for every person actually engaged in trade or manufacture, in the United States, there are upwards of four employed in agriculture; and the wages and profits of the former average, as the late census returns prove, upwards of FIFTY PER CENT. higher than those of the latter; in the proportion of fifteen dollars a month to the farmer, and more than twenty-five dollars a month to the manufacturer. Thus, then, a privileging tariff acts. It takes from the pockets of four men, to fill the purse of one; and—using the terms rich and poor by comparison—it selects the poor from whom to take, and the rich to whom to give. Let the people of this Republic but see and test, and thoroughly understand such a system, and its existence and its injustice will soon terminate together!

It is true, and ought not to be forgotten, that there are very many, among our manufacturers, who are moderate and far-sighted enough to regret the importunate and unreasonable claims set up by the class to which they belong; and who are satisfied with that measure of protection which a strictly revenue tariff of necessity affords them. They feel that sudden fluctuations are ruinous to commerce. They are fully aware, that stability, with a low revenue duty, is, in the end, far preferable to instability, the sure result, as Henry Clay has himself confessed, of high protection.

But it must be admitted, that the same spirit of moderation and conciliation, which thus animates a minority only among manufacturers, is shown by almost the entire body of those who suffer under the protective system. Observe the reasonableness of the position which the opponents of a protective tariff assume. The South and the West almost unanimously consent to any tariff tax that is required for economical revenue. To adopt that mode of taxation at all, is a great concession to their brethren of the North and East; and as such, they ought to regard it. To the amount of the revenue duty their manufactures are, not protected but privileged. It is a bounty granted to them, incidentally indeed, but not the less at the expense of others. The friends of a revenue tariff do not complain of that, however; but what they do complain of is, that these favored sections of the Union, not satisfied with the privilege of such a tariff, are, like other privileged bodies, ever grasping after more. The anti-protectionists agree to pay, in an indirect form for the advantage of manufacturers, twenty—twenty-five per cent.—one dollar for every four or five of first cost—or even more if fairly required for revenue—on articles coming into competition with their manufactures. They make no objection to all this. But what they do object to is, that this monopolizing interest, after all they have done for it, should still, like the horse-leach, cry Give! give!—that, in spite of tacit pledges once solemnly made to the contrary, it has demanded, and obtained at the hands of a Whig Congress, a tariff as high—to the full as odiously oppressive—as that of 1828; the same that half kindled the torch of civil war in the land, and threatened—what the united forces of Europe might attempt in vain—the very dismemberment of our glorious Confederacy.

NOTE 1.

The first English corn law was passed in 1670. It imposed "prohibitory duties on the importation of wheat, till the price rose to 53s. 4d., and a duty of es. between that price and 80s."—*McCulloch's Dictionary of Commerce*, p. 404.

It is a singular item in the history of commercial restrictions, that from the conquest until the year 1836, the *exportation* of wheat from England was actually prohibited: afterwards, heavy duties were imposed upon exportation; now it is free. "For 500 years after the conquest, *importation* was substantially free;" while, "during the last century and a half it has, for the most part, been subject to severe restrictions."—*Ibid.*, p. 403.

NOTE 2.

In Senate, January 26, 1838, pending the discussion of the bill, granting "pre-emptions to actual settlers," Mr. CLAY, of Kentucky, said: "In no shape in which the bill could be placed, could be brought to vote for it. The whole pre-emption system was a violation of all law, and an encouragement for persons to go on the public lands and take the choicest portion of them, as suited their interests or inclinations."—*Congressional Globe, 2d Session, 25th Congress*, p. 142.

Mr. CLAY's language on this occasion, as given in Niles's Register, is: "All pre-emption laws were nothing more than a struggle between those who would violate the law and those who would maintain its supremacy."—*Register of February 3, 1838*, p. 358. And again: "He (Mr. CLAY) would like to know by what authority such a bill could be passed. He regarded it as a reward for the violation of law," &c.—*Same Register*, p. 359.

In Senate, January 27, 1838, Mr. TIPTON said: "He understood that the Senator from Kentucky denounced the settlers on the lands as a lawless banditti of land robbers, unjustly grasping at the public treasure."

Here Mr. CLAY rose and said, "He would repeat what he did say on the occasion referred to by the honorable Senator from Indiana. He did say, that the squatters on the public lands were a lawless rabble; that they might as well seize upon our forts, our arsenals, or on the public treasure, as to rush out and seize on the public lands."—*National Intelligencer of February 5, 1838*.

NOTE. 3.

McQUEEN, in his "General Statistics of the British Empire," 1836, p. 30, states, that "the land cultivated in wheat in the United Kingdom, is certainly upwards of five millions of acres." He estimates the average produce per acre at 4 quarters, or 32 bushels; but this is probably too high. SPACKMAN, in his "Statistics of the British Empire," 1843, p. 13, gives us the average produce from the year 1838 to perhaps a sixth. Taking it at 25 bushels per acre, which may be near the truth, it would give us one hundred and twenty-five million bushels, as the annual production of Great Britain and Ireland.

The average price for 30 years, from 1800 to 1830, was two dollars and twenty-three cents a bushel. Latterly it has been lower. For the last 12 years, namely, from 1831 to 1843 inclusive, the average has been seven shillings and two pence, or a dollar and seventy-five cents, per bushel.—Spackman, p. 15. That was its average for the year 1842. (*Ibid.*) At that price the duty is nearly two shillings, say fifty cents, a bushel.

The average price of wheat in France (separated but by a narrow channel from corn-law-ridden England) from 1819 to 1836 inclusive, was 40 shillings and a penny per quarter; or a dollar and twenty-two cents per bushel.—*Supplement to McCulloch's Dictionary of Commerce, article Corn*, p. 35.

The closest rate of exchange of flour for wheat is 4 bushels and 45 lbs. for a barrel of 196 lbs. This would bring flour up to five cents a pound, where wheat is worth \$2 a bushel. As this has been about the average price of wheat in England for the last 40 years, the price—the retail price especially—of flour in England throughout that period cannot have averaged less than five cents a pound.

NOTE 4.

It is well known, that the British tariff duties on wheat are graduated, according to what is called the "sliding scale;" so that in proportion as the price of wheat rises the duty diminishes; and as the price of wheat sinks the duty increases. At the usual prices of wheat, the duty amounts nearly to a prohibition. Spackman, in his "Statistics of the British Empire" (for 1843, at page 42) gives the "total quantity of foreign and colonial wheat entered for home consumption, from 15th July, 1838, to December, 1841, with the total amount of duty received thereon." The quantity is 13,555,471 quarters, and the total duty (for thirteen years and a half) is £3,779,417; or between 18 and 19 millions of dollars. This gives the average total of duty paid into the treasury each year, about \$1,400,000; which is but about the one hundred and seventieth part of the entire taxes levied in Great Britain.

NOTE 5.

In table No. 17, appended to Senator Woodbury's tariff speech of Feb. 7 and 8, 1844, Mr. W. gives as an average obtained from the census documents, the yearly income per head for each individual in the United States, seventy-one dollars. This, though the data are imperfect, is probably near the truth.

Spackman (Statistics 1843, p. 160) gives us the estimated yearly income of Great Britain and Ireland at £535,291,447 sterling; with a population of about 26½ millions; say £20, or a hundred dollars, a head. Other writers (McQueen, for example, Statistics p. 220) estimate the total income as high as 700 millions; which would give a hundred and thirty dollars a head. Call it but a hundred and seven dollars; and it would exceed, by fifty per cent, the average income of the United States as computed by Mr. Woodbury.

NOTE 6.

See "Annual Report of the Council of the Liverpool Anti-monopoly Association (Liverpool branch of the League) for the year 1842," first quotation at page 29; the second at page 6. On the latter page is a note appended to the item of "1587 families partially employed," which note reads thus:

"Of whom 27 were employed 5 days per week.

324	do.	4	do.
595	do.	3	do.
465	do.	2	do.
176	do.	1	do.

1587"

It is added here, to show the care and accuracy bestowed on an investigation, that discloses such startling and terrible results.

It is not, of course, argued, that these results are all to be ascribed to corn laws or a tariff system; but the existence of such wide-spreading misery shows the utter fallacy of the common argument, that we ought to imitate England's system of policy, because of her "prosperous example."

That England's tariff and excise systems, furnishing, in an indirect form, nine-tenths of her revenue, incalculably aggravate these evils, no one conversant with the facts will deny. The (London) League of March 9, 1844, furnishes the detailed expenditure of two English families, selected as personally known to the writer, neither being extreme cases; showing, item by item, the proportion of taxes paid under this system, by the rich and the poor. The one family is that of John Alien, a working man, with a wife and five children; his expenditure was about \$250, his taxes \$25. The other, that of a family in easy circumstances, spending about \$7,000 a year; their taxes about \$400; and—of these last Sir Robert Peel's lately enacted income tax raised upwards of one half. The poor man paid ten per cent. of his small income, the rich man six per cent. of his large one; and before the enacting of the income tax, the proportion would have been ten to three. Yet even this gross disparity gives one no just idea of the actual state of the case. The tariff on wheat alone puts into the pockets of the landed proprietor more, twice over, than all the taxes that proprietor pays, direct or indirect.